Vaisnava-siddhanta-mala

by Srila Saccidananda Bhakti Vinoda Thakur

A Garland of Vaishnava Truths

Introduction

Srila Sac-cid-ananda Bhakti Vinoda Thakura published the book Vaishnava-Siddhanta-Mala in the year 1892 from Calcutta, West Bengal, India.

The Thakura cited the famous verse "Sri Madhvah praha vishnum paratamam akhila amnaya- vedyam ca visvam" on the cover of his book.

This famous verse appears in the Prameya-Ratnavali of Sripada Baladeva Vidyabhusana (Prameya- Ratnavali 1.8). This verse is a summary description of the ten fundamental truths of Vaishnavism as enunciated by Sripada Madhvacarya, the founder of the Brahma-Madhva-sampradaya.

This theological treatise of the Thakura presents the fundamental truths of Gaudiya Vaisnavism in a clear, concise format of questions and answers. This book was originally published as a philosophical introduction to the five sections of a book describing the method of spreading the Nama Hatta program or the market place of the Holy name of Krsna. We invite the readers to carefully read the Thakura's masterful and elegant presentation and appreciate the depth of His devotion and preaching spirit.

1 Chapter

Nava-prameya-siddhanta (Nine Truths of Evidence)

Q. What command has the supremely worshipable Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu given to us?

A. His order is this: that we very carefully observe the nine instructions of truth that Sri Madhvacarya has given us through the guru-parampara (disciplic succession).

Q. Who forms the guru-parampara?

A. The adi-guru (original guru) of all the spiritual masters in the disciplic succession is Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Showing His great mercy, He gave instructions in the truth to Lord Brahma, the adi-kavi (original poet). These truths were in turn taught by Brahma to Sri Narada, by Narada to Vyasa, and successively from Vyasa to Sri Madhvacarya. Such instructions received through this disciplic succession are called Guru-Parampara-Upadesa.

Q. What are the names of these nine instructions given by Sri Madhvacarya?

A. Their names are thus:

1) Bhagavan alone is the Supreme truth, one without a second.

2) He is the object of knowledge in all the Vedas.

3) The universe is real [satya].

4) Differences [between Isvara, jiva and matter] are real.

5) Jiva souls are the servants of Lord Hari.

6) All souls are different according to their different situations.

7) Liberation [moksa] is the name of attainment of Bhagavan's feet.

8) Bhagavan's pure worship [amala bhajana] is the only way to attain liberation.

9) Pratyaksa [direct perception], anumana [logic], and sabda [spiritual sound] are the three types of evidence.

2 Chapter

Bhagavan Alone Is the Supreme Truth

Q. Who is Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead?

A. Bhagavan is the one Who expands all jivas and all matter by His own inconceivable energy (acintya-sakti), and then enters into these creations as the Supreme Lord (Isvara-svarupa). He also transcends all souls and matter as the impersonal Brahman effulgence (brahma-svarupa), which is far beyond all imagination; and moreover, it is He who manifests His divine potency (para-sakti) to reveal His form of eternity, knowledge and bliss (sac-cid-ananda svarupa), thereby becoming the object of devotion for all souls.

Q. What are the different types of the Lord's potencies?

A. We are unable to fully describe the Lord's potencies. The reason for this is His saktis have no boundaries, whereas we have boundaries; therefore, His energies are called para-sakti. These saktis are completely imperceptible to us, but on the other side of the matter, in the divine realm of His para-sakti, all things are accomplished effortlessly. Thus the para-sakti simultaneously conducts the opposing affairs of spirit and matter automatically.

Q. Then is Bhagavan subordinate to the sakti?

A. It is not that Bhagavan is one thing and the sakti is another, just as the burning power of the fire is inseparable from the fire, similarly Bhagavan's sakti is inseparable from Bhagavan.

Q. If Bhagavan is the one and only Supreme truth then why did Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu give His followers instructions about devotional service to Sri Krsna (Krsna Bhakti)?

A. Bhagavan has six eternal qualities - He possesses all wealth, strength, fame, beauty, knowledge and renunciation. Different forms of the Lord (Bhagavad-svarupa) manifest according to whether certain of these qualities are being

expressed to greater or lesser degrees. For example, when His wealth feature is foremost, then He manifests as Narayana, the Lord of Vaikuntha; when His beauty and sweetness predominate, then He manifests as Vrindavana-Candra Sri Krsna. Therefore, only Sri Krsna is the topmost supreme manifestation of Bhagavan.

Q. How many types of forms does the Lord have?

A. All of His forms are fully conscious, supremely beautiful, overflowing with divine bliss, all attractive, vibrantly active, and perceivable by pure love. According to the different natures of different souls, the Lord's eternal form manifests in an infinite number of ways. Thus, according to these differences in the Lord's manifestation, different natured souls are eternally attached to Him in their own original forms. Only the form of Sri Krsna is the eternal blissful svarupa.

Q. What is Sri Krsna's lila?

A. Among the limitless variegated realms of the entire spiritual world, the most supremely charming portion is called Sri-Vrndavana. There, Sac-Cid-Ananda Sri Krsna is present in the form of Sri Sri Radha-Krsna for the purpose of performing eternal pastimes. When souls manifest their own form of divine bliss, then they live in Vrindavana in the mood of Sri Radhika's girlfriends (since She is the personification of supreme bliss), and thus they attain the qualification for participation in Sri Krsna's eternal pastimes.

Q. What are the obstacles to the attainment of Sri Krsna lila?

A. There are two types of obstacles: 1) material consciousness (jada-buddhi) and 2) beyond the conception of material consciousness, there is impersonal consciousness (nirvisesa-buddhi).

Q. What is material consciousness?

A. Material consciousness is an awareness that is limited to material time, place, objects, aspirations, thoughts and activities. According to material consciousness, one sees the realm of

Vrindavana dhama to be a material place. Time is divided into three parts: past, present and future. Objects refer to all perishable things. Aspiration refers to the hopes for impermanent happiness, such as attaining the heavenly planets, etc. In this condition, the soul can think only in material thoughts. Such a soul imagines the following temporary activities to be worthwhile:

— the culture of civilisation

— moral ethics

— scientific learning

— industrial development

— and the increase of domestic prosperity.

Q. What is impersonal consciousness?

A. First, the principle in the material world which separates all things is called visesa (distinction based upon material quality). By merely renouncing material thinking, one only gives up the conception of material distinction, and thereby one's consciousness falls into the realm of nirvisesa (non-distinction). In this condition, one is unable to perceive the differences between material objects, since the self is situated in nirvana or merging with the impersonal abode of Brahman. This state is not a happy one at all; being bereft of the natural bliss of the eternally conscious soul, the prema or ecstatic love for the Lord remains concealed. The eternal pastimes of Sri Krsna are certainly beyond matter; indeed, they are endowed with cin-maya-visesa, or divinely conscious distinction.

Q. If Sri Krsna's pastimes are beyond matter, then how does He enact His lila in the material world at the end of the Dvapara-Yuga?

A. Sri Krsna-Lila is certainly transcendental to matter, but by the power of His inconceivable potency (acintya-sakti) He manifests His sports within the material sphere. Even though manifested there, Sri Krsna's pastimes never blend with matter or become subject to the rules of matter. These pastimes of Sri Krsna have two phases: 1) Prakata (manifest in the material world), 2) Aprakata (manifest only in the spiritual world beyond matter) and both conditions are

visuddha-cinmaya, or pervaded with the purest divine consciousness. His pastimes are performed only in the most purely sacred realm of Vaikuntha, and they are centered in the forest of Sri Vrindavana. Their manifestation in the material world and in the hearts of jivas is only due to His acintya-sakti as well as His causeless mercy. Even when Krsna's lila is performed in the world of matter, the conditioned souls who partake of the material consciousness (jada-buddhi) are unfortunately cheated; their contact with matter makes them see the lila with faulty vision. Whoever becomes freed from jada- buddhi, just like the two rascals Jagai and Madhai did during the pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, then they will also be able to understand these truths. Becoming relieved of faulty material vision, such fortunate souls are then attracted to the Lord's pastimes. As long as the jivas cannot understand Sri Krsna-Tattva (the truth about the Lord), then they cannot taste rasa or divine relishable mellows.

Q. These truths of Sri Krsna-tattva are the religious principles of the Vaishnava-dharma. What about people who are involved with other types of religion?

A. Different religions have different instructions for the worship of either Isvara (the personal God), Paramatma (the localised Supersoul in the heart) or Brahma (His all-pervading impersonality) - but all three of these types of religions are ultimately pointing in the direction of Krsna-Tattva. After the jivas evolve upwards through their various courses of development, they eventually will attain Krsna Bhakti in the end. Even though they attain the incompleteness of their various religious paths, Sri Krsna Bhakti is still available to them. The awareness of the supreme nature of Sri Krsna-tattva is the ultimate knowledge inherent within each and every living entity.

3 Chapter

He Is Knowable by All the Vedas

Q. How can one know the truth of the Lord (Bhagavat-tattva)?

A. This can be known by the soul's knowledge of the self-evident truth (svatah-siddha-jnana).

Q. What is self-evident truth?

A. There are two types of knowledge (jnana): 1) self-evident(svatah-siddha),and 2) that which depends on the senses (indriya-paratantra). Self-evident knowledge is the natural truth that is inherently a feature of the pure spirit soul's original form. It is eternal, just as the totality of the divinely conscious realm is also eternal. This self-evident knowledge is called veda or amnaya.

This veda, in the form of pure knowledge (siddha-jnana-rupa) has incarnated in the material world in the shape of Rk, Sama, Yajuh and Atharva, along with the conditioned souls (baddhadivas); this alone is the self-evident knowledge (svatah-siddha-jnana). Whatever knowledge that ordinary souls can gather through the use of their material senses is only the second type of knowledge, or indriya-paratantra (dependent on the senses).

Q. Can anyone know the Bhagavat-tattva (the truth of the Lord) by indriya-paratantra-jnana (sensual knowledge)?

A. No. Bhagavan, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is beyond the scope of all the material senses. For this reason, He is known as Adhoksaja. The senses, as well as all the material conceptions gathered from the sense perceptions, always remain very far away from the Bhagavat- tattva, the truth of the Lord.

Q. If Bhagavan is attainable through self-evident knowledge (svatah-siddha-jnana), then we should be able to attain Him by whatever svatah-siddha-jnana that we presently have. What then is the need to study the Vedic scriptures?

A. The Veda is present in every pure spirit soul's existence in the form of svatah-siddha-jnana. According to the different levels of different souls in the materially conditioned state, this Veda will spontaneously manifest itself to one person, or may remain veiled to someone else. Therefore, to help reawaken the forgetful conditioned souls to the eternally self-evident truths, the Veda has also incarnated in the form of written books which may be studied, recited and heard.

Q. We have heard that Bhagavan is perceivable only through bhakti (devotional service). If this is true, then how can we say that He is perceivable by jnana, even svatah-siddha-jnana?

A. That which is called svatah-siddha-jnana is another name for bhakti. When speaking of topics related to the supreme truth (para-tattva), some call it jnana and some call it bhakti.

Q. Then why is jnana condemned in the devotional scriptures (bhakti-sastras)?

A. The devotional scriptures express a great reverence for svatah-siddha-jnana; indeed, they state that other than this purely self-evident spiritual knowledge, there is no auspicious welfare. The types of jnana that are condemned in the bhakti sastras are: 1) indriya-paratantra-jnana (knowledge based on sense perception) and 2) nirvisesa-jnana (impersonal non-distinct knowledge), the latter of which is merely an absence of the former.

Q. All the Vedic scriptures speak of 1) karma (fruitive activities), 2) jnana (speculative knowledge) and 3) bhakti (devotional service). By which of these can the Bhagavat-tattva (the truth of the Lord) be known?

A. By examining the statements of all the Vedas collectively, it is seen that they are all in complete agreement that other than Bhagavan, there is nothing but nothing else worth knowing. All the karma (fruitive activities) mentioned in the Vedas ultimately lead to Bhagavan. When jnana (speculative knowledge) fructifies into its pure condition, then one gives up all dualities that arise from both visesa-jnana and nirvisesa-jnana, one then aims for Bhagavan. The process of Bhakti (devotional service) naturally cultivates a direct relationship with Bhagavan; therefore the Lord can be known by all the Vedas.

4 Chapter

The Universe Is Real

Q. Some people say, "This universe is false - it is only made of maya." Is this true?

A. This universe is real, but it is temporary and perishable. The two characteristics 'real' and 'eternal' have separate meanings. The material universe

is not eternal, because eventually it will be destroyed according to the Lord's desire. But it is a factual reality, not false. Whenever the scriptures say that this universe is false, it is to be understood that this statement merely refers to its temporary, perishable nature.

Q. What is Maya?

A. Bhagavan's divine potency (para-sakti) is composed of an infinite variety of energies. Among all of these, we know about three in particular: the principles of I) cit (consciousness), 2) jiva (spirit soul) and 3) maya (material illusion). From His cit potency, the Lord issues forth the manifestation of His own forms and pastimes (bhagavat-tattva-prakasa); from His jiva potency, He issues forth a limitless number of tiny atomic particles of consciousness; from His maya potency, He issues forth the manifestation of this material universe. Whatever is produced from the maya potency is perishable, but for the duration of its manifestation, it is real.

5 Chapter

Difference (Bheda) Is Real

Q. Whenever both Bhagavan and the jivas are spoken of as being conscious (caitanya), then is the difference between the two real or imaginary?

A. No. Bhagavan's consciousness is all pervading (vibhu-caitanya), and the jiva's consciousness is infinitesimal (anu-caitanya). This difference between the two is not imaginary, but factual. Bhagavan is the Lord of His own maya-sakti, whereas the jivas are subordinate to maya-sakti.

Q. How many types of bheda (difference) are there?

A. There are two types of Bheda: vyavaharika (relating to behavior) and tattvika (relating to truth).

Q. What is vyahavarika-bheda?

A. This is illustrated in the difference between a clay pot and a piece of cloth. They seem to be different things, but they both originated from the same thing - the soil of the earth. In the original condition as soil, there is no difference between the two things (the pot and the cloth). This type of difference is called vyavaharika-bheda .

Q. What is tattvika-bheda?

A. This is when one thing is different from another thing in its function as well as in its original cause. This type of difference is called tattvika-bheda.

Q. Is the difference between the jiva and Bhagavan vyavaharika or tattvika?

A. Tattvika.

Q. Why is that?

A. Because in no condition whatsoever can the jiva become Bhagavan.

Q. Then how are we to understand the profound statements (maha-vakya) of the scriptures like tat- tvam-asi (You are that Is)?

A. The great sage Svetaketu received the following instructions: "you are spirit soul; you are not born from matter, but from consciousness (caitanya). From this lesson it is never to be understood that you are the supreme all-pervading consciousness (vibhu-caitanya)."

Q. Then the scriptural statements regarding the oneness of the jiva with the all-pervading Brahman effulgence do not apply?

A. From the jiva's point of view, the difference between the two (bheda) is eternal; and from Brahman's point of view, the non-difference is eternal. Therefore difference and non-difference (bheda and abheda) are both eternal and true.

Q. How can we understand this contradictory conclusion?

A. By the Lord's inconceivable potency (acintya-sakti), all contradictory truths exist in complete harmony; but the tiny jivas, who possess very limited intelligence, think that such things are impossible.

Q. Then why do we always hear condemnation of the philosophy of oneness?

A. Because those who propound the philosophy of oneness say that the difference is also eternal, and by proving this, they have correctly ascertained the doubtless truth of acintya-bhedabheda (simultaneous oneness and difference). Those who preach the philosophy of bhedabheda are faultless, whereas those who only propound either bheda or abheda are condemned by their adherence to a one-sided truth.

Q. Who has the sole opinion of abheda (non-difference)?

A. The nirvisesa-vadis (propounders of non-distinction) only accept the philosophy of abheda, whereas the savisesa-vadis (propounders of eternal distinction) do not accept this philosophy of abheda.

Q. Who accepts the savisesa philosophy?

A. All the Vaisnava-Sampradayas accept it.

Q. How many sampradayas do the Vaisnavas have?

A. There are four principal vaisnava doctrines: 1) Dvaita, 2) Visista-advaita, 3) Dvaita-advaita, 4) Suddha-dvaita

Q. Are there any ontological disagreements among their views?

A. There is no actual disagreement between their doctrines, for they are all savisesa-vadis (believers in eternal distinction). None of them tolerate the philosophy of kevala-abheda (only oneness). All of these four Vaishnava groups have affection for the Lord, and thus they accept the true principles of the Lord's energy (bhagavat-sakti). Those of the dvaita school (dvaita-vadis) say that those of the exclusively advaita school are totally blind. This is because the dvaita-

vadis can see the eternality of the dvaita-vada (doctrine of duality). This is the opinion of Sri Madhvacarya. The visista-advaita-vadis say that all things are endowed with attributes, and therefore can never be advaita or non-dual. The dvaita-advaita-vadis are very outspoken in their views, which clearly denounce the impersonal philosophy of advaita. The doctrine of suddha-advaita also condemns the advaita philosophy and establishes its own conclusion by emphasising the pure form of eternal attributes. By seeing and thoroughly understanding an overview of these four schools of Vaishnava doctrine, it is obvious that there is no disagreement among them.

Q. Then why did Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu accept only the doctrine of Sri Madhvacarya?

A. The special characteristic of Madhvacarya's doctrine is that it very clearly defeats the faulty mistakes of the advaita philosophy. By maintaining this forceful position, the distress caused by the impersonal philosophy is cast very far away. Therefore, in order to bring about safe and sure benefit for the unfortunate conditioned souls who are weakened from the onslaughts of Kali-Yuga, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu accepted the doctrine of Sri Madhvacarya. But by doing so He did not minimise the importance of the other three vaishnava doctrines whatsoever. Whichever type of savisesa-vada (philosophy of eternal distinction) one accepts is just fine, for it will certainly bring eternal auspiciousness.

6 Chapter

Jiva Is the Servant of Sri Hari

Q. What is the natural eternal position (nitya-dharma) of the spirit soul?

A. The nitya-dharma of the jiva is service to Sri Krsna (krsna-dasya).

Q. What is the unnatural, fallen position (vaidharmya) of the spirit soul?

A. The downfall of the jiva occurs: 1) When a deluded soul accepts the doctrine of non-difference (abheda) and seeks impersonal nirvana; or 2) When a foolish

soul seeks proficiency in materialistic pleasures.

Q. Why do you call these things unnatural?

A. They're unnatural because the spirit soul is made of eternal consciousness (cinmaya), and the only eternal nature of anything that is cinmaya is happiness (ananda) and love (priti). In the impersonalistic doctrine of nirvisesa-vada there is no happiness; their ultimate goal is simply to negate the soul. And in the philosophy of the materialistic visesa-vada (vaisesika), the unique eternal spiritual distinction of the soul is obliterated. Therefore, both the jiva's downfall and the jada-vada cause the jiva's downfall.

Q. Who searches after materialistic happiness?

A. People who are bewildered by their material karma conduct fruitive activities on the entangling path of action and reaction, and thereby pursue future happiness with hopes of attaining the heavenly material planets, etc.

Q. Who searches for power and influence in the material sphere?

A. Those who have achieved perfection in the path of astanga yoga (eightfold process), and also those who practice the path of Sadanga-Yoga (six-fold process), search for power in the material sphere that comes from the fruits of their mysticism (vibhuti).

Q. What will remain of the spirit soul if you rebuke both materialistic happiness and impersonal nirvana?

A. Then the soul will rest in its own natural joyfulness. These two types of so-called happiness are merely material designations (upadhika); the realization of the soul's natural, eternal ecstasy is not a material designation (it is nirupadhika).

Q. What is the realization of the soul's own true happiness?

A. The spirit soul that is stripped of its relationship with matter perceives the ecstatic happiness of cultivating its relationship with Sri Krsna, a boundless joy that is characteristic of its own pure consciousness - that is the natural happiness

of the jiva.

7 Chapter

Different Levels of Jivas

Q. Are all souls of one type, or are there different relative levels?

A There are different relative levels among the jivas.

Q. How many types of levels are there?

A. There are two types: those living in the reality of their natural eternal form (svarupa), and those living in the dream of their false material designation (upadhi).

Q. What is the material designation of the soul?

A. The soul's material designation consists of all the forms of maya that captivate the soul as a result of having turned away from Krsna.

Q. Why don't souls remain in their true position, free from material designations?

A. Those souls who accept nothing other than service as their eternal occupation do not give up their transcendence to material designations, which is natural in their true position (svarupa). Their attraction to facing Krsna is everlasting. But those who consent to the notion of selfishly seeking the enjoyment of their own so-called happiness turn away from Krsna, and for this reason they are shackled within the prison-house of the material world made of maya.

Q. It would be very good if Krsna protected spirit souls from such unfortunate misconceptions; why doesn't He do that?

A. In this regard, I would like to say that Lord Krsna gives His expanded spirit souls a quality of independence - a free will that allows them to chose between

loving Him or pursuing selfish illusions. If a soul chooses to misuse this independence, then its svarupa or essential eternal form falls into a position of dull matter. In this stupefied condition, the soul cannot perceive the bliss of its own true spiritual independence, a boundless joy which is natural for a soul composed of eternal consciousness (cit).

A. The jiva is made of cit, and enjoying ananda is its only dharma.

Q. How many relative levels are there among souls situated in their natural, eternal position (svarupa)?

A. There are five types, because there are five eternal mellows (nitya-rasa) in the spiritual world. Being naturally situated in their own respective mellows, the jivas thereby represent different levels of eternal existence.

Q. What are the five different mellows?

A. Neutrality (santa), servitude (dasya), friendship (sakhya), paternity (vatsalya) and conjugal affection (sringara).

Q. Please explain the meanings of these five words?

A. 1) Attachment to Krsna that does not involve a close personal relationship with Him is called santa-rati; 2) Attachment to Krsna that has a personal relationship, but which consists of a mood of service endowed with awe and reverence is called dasya-rati; 3) Attachment to Krsna which has a personal relationship, which is devoid of reverence to the point of friendly confidence is called sakhya-rati; 4) Attachment to Krsna which has a personal relationship, and is full of an overflowing caring mood of love (sneha) is called vatsalya-rati; 5) Attachment to Krsna which attains the level of a lover's familiarity, and which is endowed with sheer brilliance of beauty is called Sringara- Rati.

Q. Are there any different aspects of love (rati) or mellow (rasa)?

A. Love is nourished by the combination of these four ingredients: 1) Vibhava — (supporting characters and specific stimulants), 2) Anubhava — (13 resultant ecstatic symptoms), 3) Sattvika — (8 especially disruptive ecstatic symptoms)

and 4) Vyabhicari - (33 transitory accompanying emotions). The divine interweaving of these four ingredients stimulates the continuous gushing of the eternally perfect mellows.

Q. How many different levels are there in the materially designated conditions?

A. There are three basic types: 1) Jivas with concealed consciousness, like trees and plants, etc. 2) Jivas with constricted consciousness, like animals and birds, etc., and 3) Jivas with budding consciousness, like people bereft of devotion, etc.

Q. How many different types of jivas are there in regard to being either materially conditioned or spiritually liberated?

A. There are three basic types: 1) Nitya-mukta or eternally liberated souls, they are transcendental to matter; 2) Baddha-Mukta or those who are living in the material world but not caught up in it; and 3) Nitya-baddha or perpetually conditioned souls who are completely entangled in material perplexities.

Q. What type of souls are classified as nitya-baddha (perpetually conditioned)?

A. The three types of souls are concealed, constricted and budding consciousness are considered to be Nitya-baddha.

Q. How many types of Baddha-Mukta souls are there?

A. There are two types: 1) Those with blooming consciousness, like practicing devotees (sadhana-bhaktas); and 2) Those with fully flowering consciousness, like devotees who are relishing the outpourings of ecstatic devotional service due to being situated in their natural eternal mellow (sthayi-bhava-bhaktas).

Q. Where do the Nitya-Baddha and the Baddha-Mukta souls reside?

A. They live in the world of maya.

Q. Where do the Nitya-Mukta souls reside?

A. In the spiritual world of Vaikuntha (the place of no anxiety).

Q. How many comparative levels of souls are there with budding consciousness?

A. There are many, but it is possible to roughly classify them into six general types thusly: 1) Uncivilised tribes of ignorant people, like the Pulindas (aborigines) and the Sabaras (mountain people), etc. 2) Civilised races which have a development of materialistic knowledge and science, as well as an emphasis on industrialised production of material goods; they do not know what is proper moral conduct, nor do they have actual faith in God; these are the characteristics of the mlecchas (meat-eating races), etc. 3) Races which have no personal God, but which are very fond of the natural beauty of the material world, like the Buddhists, etc. 4) Races whose ethics are endowed with a philosophy and faith of an imaginary God, just like the karma-vadis (worshippers of various demigods, etc., who do good with the hope of being elevated to higher planets. This is called imaginary because they believe various demigods to be the Supreme Personality of Godhead). 5) Races which accept the true Lord of Creation, but do not perform devotional service unto Him. 6) Races who are fond of the nirvisesa-vada (doctrine of ultimate impersonal oneness), like the jnana-kandis (those who practice the path of intellectually-wrangled spiritual knowledge).

Q. What are the different levels of all these classifications of souls?

A. From the concealed-consciousness entities up to the budding-consciousness entities, they are all classified according to the degree of their engagement in the principles of devotional service unto the Lord (bhakti-tattva). Among the blooming-consciousness entities (devotees) and the fully- flowering-consciousness entities (ecstatic devotees), the comparative levels are obvious.

8 Chapter

Liberation Is the Attainment of Krsna's Lotus Feet

Q. How many different types of liberation (moksa) are there?

A. It is said that there are five types of moksha: 1) Salokya or living on the same planet as the Lord, 2) Sarsti or achieving divine opulences similar to the Lord's, 3) Samipya or becoming a close associate of the Lord, 4) Sarupya or obtaining bodily features similar to the Lord's, 5) Sayujya or merging into the Lord's impersonal effulgence. Of these, the sayujya-nirvana or conception of liberation by becoming merged in supreme oneness is specifically the mistaken concoction of the nirvisesa-vada (philosophy of non-difference); this mistake is not to be taken into consideration by foolish souls. From the point of view of the impersonal Brahman, this form of merging is one form of perfection. But when a soul becomes perfected by knowing the truth of simultaneous oneness and difference (bhedabheda), then the aspect of oneness (which formerly had the power to obliterate all differences) is unable to remain prominent.

A. Only the attainment of the lotus feet of Sri Krsna, in its purest form, is actual liberation.

Q. Why is only attainment of the lotus feet of Sri Krsna called liberation?

A. This is because the shelter of Sri Krsna's lotus feet automatically situates one in freedom from the influence of matter. The other forms of liberation are only temporary situations, for the soul must fall down again when the effects are concluded. But the ecstatic bliss of drinking the nectar of the Lord's lotus feet is a permanent situation; therefore what else could I possibly call liberation?

Q. Please give me an example of this?

A. When a lamp is lit, it simultaneously spreads its illumination as it destroys the darkness. In this example, the darkness represents the principle of impersonal liberation, and the lamplight represents the principle of situation at the nectarine lotus feet of Sri Krsna. The lamplight is everlasting, whereas the darkness is not. It can only exist for a short while, whereas the illumination of the light is eternal.

9 Chapter

Pure Worship of Krsna Is the Cause of Liberation

Q. What must one do to attain liberation in the form of drinking the nectar

of the lotus feet of Sri Krsna?

A. One attains such nectar by engaging in the pure devotional worship of Krsna (amala-krsna- bhajan).

Q. What are you calling amala-krsna-bhajan?

A. When a soul bound up in the material world, performs worship, free from impurities, for the sole purpose of attaining attraction to Krsna, that is called amala-krsna-bhajan.

Q. What are the impurities that hinder Krsna-Bhajan?

A. The three impurities are the desire for material sense gratification, the desire for the goal of impersonal merging, and the desire for mystic powers.

Q. What are desires for material sense gratification?

A. There are three kinds: the desire for the enjoyment of worldly sensual pleasures, the desire for the enjoyment of attaining the heavenly material planets in the next life, and the desire for the enjoyment of the seeming peace that comes from dry renunciation.

Q. You say that one must give up sense gratification, give up religious principles that bring happiness in the next life, and give up renunciation as well - but how will one maintain one's body? How will one benefit the world? How will one relieve the troubles that arise due to enthusiasm for sensual affairs?

A. It is not possible to completely give up the affairs of the material senses, religious principles meant for the welfare of the world, or renunciation which brings about peace. However, the desire to enjoy these things, as well as enthusiastic endeavors to pursue them, must certainly be given up.

Q. How can that be possible?

A. Just perform all the bodily, mental and social duties that are necessary

according to the varna- asrama-dharma system (the spiritual divisions of social structure). You should perform all these activities in such a way as to nicely assist you in your cultivation of devotional service to Sri Krsna. By doing this properly, you'll see that there will be no impediments to your direct cultivation of pure Krsna Consciousness. Just use whatever easily comes your way in life to nourish your direct cultivation of devotion. That will help you in your divine advancement, for such a life style automatically and simultaneously fulfills all duties, religiosity and renunciation.

Q. Material duties and activities are certainly very different than spiritual truths; how will performing such activities nourish one's eternal spiritual nature?

A. The secret is to integrate the affairs of the senses, materialistic knowledge, and all material relationships, by dovetailing them with ecstatic emotions which give rise to pure Krsna-Bhakti. Please just engage all your senses in the service of the sacred deity form of the Lord. Illumine your soul with pure attachment to Krsna by eating the remnants of His prasadam, chant about the wonderful qualities of Sri Krsna, smell the sandalwood-smeared tulasi leaves that have touched the feet of Krsna, hear and chant topics about Krsna, touch people and things that are related to Krsna, go to see Krsna in the temple, etc. Thus all of your activities will gradually be offered to Krsna, and when such things give rise to the awakening of ecstatic symptoms, then your impediments will vanish, and you will be known as a devotee (sadhaka).

Q. If I accept a simple lifestyle with only the bare necessities to maintain this body, and if I eliminate material desires by practice and regulation, then couldn't I first attain samadhi through knowledge alone, and thereby gradually attain devotion to Krsna?

A. No. Because attachment to sense and sense-objects is so firmly rooted in the consciousness, even if you endeavor in yogic practices like yama (control of the senses), niyama (regulated practice) and pratyahara (withdrawing the mind from worldly attractions), it is still very difficult to eliminate your relationship with sensual things. The nature of attachment is that unless you can experience a higher object of perception, you are not able to give up your former object. But if you keep a higher thing before you, so that your gushing flow of attachment can rush toward it, then you can very easily give up your attachment to any

former objects of perception. Therefore if you perform the devotional activities that I have mentioned previously, then that alone constitutes Amala-Krsna-Bhajan (untainted devotion to Krsna).

Q. Then what do you call samala-krsna-bhajan (worship of Krsna tainted with impurities)?

A. Worship of Krsna that is performed by one who maintains the mentality of fruitive gain, endeavors in yoga practice, or hopes for impersonal liberation is called samala (tainted with impurities). These conditions make it impossible to achieve true liberation at the shelter of Krsna's lotus feet.

Q. Please summarise the condition of one whose worship is untainted?

A. Becoming righteous is simply maintaining the body sinlessly while living in the material world - just accept such a lifestyle as 'secondary devotion' of Krsna-bhakti. Whatever you easily acquire in life, just accept that as favorable for the direct cultivation of devotional service.

Q. How many types of direct cultivation are there?

A. There are nine types: 1. Sravana (hearing), 2. Kirtana (chanting), 3. Smarana (remembering), 4. Pada-sevana (serving His feet), 5. Arcana (deity worship), 6. Vandana (offering prayers), 7. Dasya (becoming His servant), 8. Sakhya (becoming His friend), and 9. Atma-nivedana (offering the totality of self).

Q. What will happen by the cultivation of all these practices?

A. By the gradual unfoldment of ecstatic emotions, you will experience the awakening of pure divine love (prema).

Q. What is prema?

A. It cannot be explained with words; it is divine mellow (rasa) - may you taste it yourself, and then you will know.

Q. During the practicing stage of devotion, what things should we be

mindful of?

A. One should avoid vikarma (indecent activities), akarma (inaction), bewilderment by karma, dry renunciation, dry knowledge, and offences.

Q. How many things constitute vikarma (indecent activities)?

A. There are numerous kinds of vikarma: the following are some of the more prominent sins:

1. Envy.
2. Cruelty.
3. Hard heartedness.
4. Violence toward all living creatures.
5. Lust for the wives of others.
6. Anger.
7. Greed for the possessions of others.
8. Absorption in selfish benefit.
9. Deceit.
10. Disrespect.
11. Pride.
12. Mental delusion.
13. Uncleanliness.
14. Vandalism.
15. Harming others.

Q. What is akarma?

A. Atheism, ingratitude, and absence of service to great souls.

Q. What is karma?

A. Karma refers to pious, dutiful activities. There are numerous types of pious activities, and the following list represents a few prominent duties:

1. Helping others.
2. Serving one's superiors.
3. Charity.
4. Constructive development.
5. Truthfulness.
6. Cleanliness.
7. Simplicity.
8. Forgiveness.
9. Mercy.
10. Engagement according to one's own qualifications.
11. Appropriate renunciation.
12. Unprejudiced consideration.

Q. What is bewilderment by karma?

A. This is when material acquisitions gained from pious activities make the mind complacent, and one thereby turns away from the advancement of the soul.

Q. What is dry renunciation?

A. Renunciation that is practiced with great endeavor is called dry or subversive renunciation. When one's devotional service increases, then one is automatically situated in true renunciation; this is called pure detachment or appropriate renunciation.

Q. What is dry knowledge?

A. That knowledge which does not specifically focus on the eternal truth of divine consciousness is called dry knowledge.

Q. How many types of aparadha (offences) are there?

A. There are two types of offense: seva aparadha (offences committed during the performance of devotional service), and nama aparadha (offences committed while chanting the holy names).

Q. What is a brief summary of Amala-Bhajana (untainted worship)?

A. Accepting one's course of life in a detached mood, attaining pure knowledge of the Lord, hearing and chanting His Glories in the company of saintly persons - this is untainted worship.

10 Chapter

Three Evidences - Spiritual Sound, Direct Perception & Logic

Q. What is evidence (pramana)?

A. Pramana is that by which the truth is ascertained.

Q. How many types of evidence are there?

A. There are three types.

Q. What are they?

A. Spiritual sound (sabda), direct perception (pratyaksa), and logic (anumana).

Q. What is spiritual sound?

A. All the Vedic scriptures are evidence in the form of spiritual sound, for they are the incarnation of self-evident knowledge (svatah-siddha-jnana). They alone are the best form of evidence. The reason for this is without such a form of evidence, it is not possible to know the truth that lives eternally beyond temporary matter.

Q. Why can't the Lord or the spiritual world be observed by direct perception and logic?

A. Evidence by direct perception (pratyaksa) is merely knowledge gathered by materialistic sensual impressions; and logic (anumana) can draw conclusions only to the extent of that same resource of material observation. These two forms of evidence can only give knowledge of the material world and nothing else.

Q. Then why do we accept the processes of direct perception and logic in ascertaining the truth of the supreme goal of life?

A. Because they are effective tools with which to confirm the perfect truthfulness of that information received from the sabda-pramana (evidence as spiritual sound; the Vedas).

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Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's explanation with regards to the verse 'aradhyo bhagavan vrajesa' and His own dasa-mula explanations:

" In this regard, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura has written in His Bengali magazine Sri Sajjana- Tosani, Volume 4, Issue 3 an article entitled "Nutana Patrika" ("A Recent Letter"):

"Srinatha Cakravarti Thakura has certainly manifested the opinion of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu in this verse, but it does not provide a full synopsis of all

philosophical truths. The verse omits many important principles like jiva-tattva (the truth of the spirit soul), jada-tattva (principles of material elements), sakti-tattva (the Lord's energies), sadhana-bhakti-tattva (principles for executing devotional service), etc. Therefore, in deliberations on the absolute truth, the verse is incomplete. Now there is a need to preach all the important truths, just as they are described in the Sat- Sandarbha of Srila Jiva Goswami ... Krsna, Krsna-sakti, Krsna-lilatmaka-bhagavat-tattva, two types of the Lord's separately expanded spirit souls (nitya-baddha and nitya-mukta jiva-tattva), maya-tattva that surrounds the fallen jivas, sadhana-tattva (techniques of devotion), sadhya-tattva (the goal of devotion) — all these tattvas can be separated into nine categories of truth.

These nine truths are the most important principles that are provable (prameya), and the tenth item is the proof (pramana), which consists of the self-evident Veda-sastra as well as the smrti-sastra (supplementary scriptures) headed by the Bhagavatam. Vaishnava devotees of the Lord cannot become fixed up in true Vedanta philosophy without understanding these ten separate points."

namo bhaktivinodaya sac-cid-ananda namine gaura sakti-svarupaya rupanuga varaya te